



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

A fight breaks out on the recreation yard of a Federal Correctional Institution. It spreads quickly to the gymnasium and nearby common areas of the institution, then to several housing units. Inmates begin to break into offices and storage areas, destroying property and setting fires. Disturbance Control and Special Operations Response Teams from this institution and two nearby Federal correctional facilities are immediately activated. The institution alerts the local sheriff's office, which provides staff to bolster perimeter security. The Disturbance Control Squad and Special Operations Response Teams restore order, containing damage and preventing serious injuries.

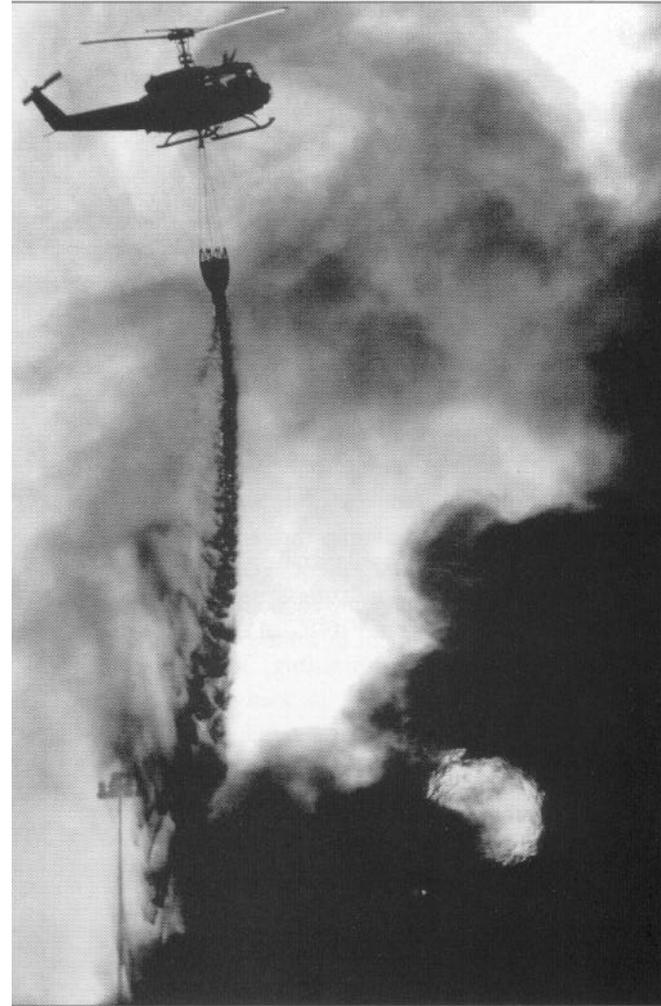
A correctional officer is accosted in a housing unit and taken hostage by an inmate who barricades a cell and threatens to kill the officer. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) representatives negotiate with the inmate and, when he begins to assault the hostage, overpower the assailant and safely free the employee.

A hurricane strikes the area where a major Federal detention facility is located; all utility services are lost, staff are unable to report for duty, and communications are cut off. Ultimately, because of extensive damage to the institution, the inmate population must be evacuated. BOP employees from throughout the Nation are deployed to the institution and assist in maintaining security, providing critical supplies, and transporting more than 1,400 inmates to other locations within a few days.

Facing page: the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) at FCI Phoenix. Right: a US Army helicopter extinguishes a building fire started by inmates during the 1987 disturbance at USP Atlanta.

A group of Cuban detainees in a high-security U.S. Penitentiary take over their work areas and then progressively over-run other areas of the prison, setting fires, acquiring makeshift weapons, and taking 102 staff members hostage. Staff at the institution respond, backed up immediately by employees from the adjacent BOP regional office. Ultimately, as the crisis continues, Disturbance Control and Special Operations Response Teams and other BOP staff from all areas of the country become involved in managing the incident. Key tactical response teams and personnel from the FBI, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and the Department of Defense (DOD) are brought in. After prolonged negotiations, the siege is brought to a peaceful conclusion, and the hostages are all released.

These are just a few examples of the kind of emergency response situations that the BOP has encountered in recent years. Each required a different type of response, relying on varying personnel, equipment, and other resources. Each of these four crises was resolved in a



successful manner, with no risk to the public, no staff deaths, and minimal use of force to regain control of the inmates involved.

Thankfully, serious emergencies like these are rare — but they do occur. When they do, the BOP must respond immediately — to protect the public, staff, inmates, and Government property. But it also must respond appropriately, ensuring that injuries to staff and inmates do not occur or, at most, are minimal — and that Government

FCI Phoenix Captain Craig Chalmers (left) reviews institution blueprints with Lieutenant and Assistant SORT leader Stewart Venable (right).

resources are not wasted. This is why the BOP has developed an emergency response capability that provides a range of options to deal with a variety of challenges — from an isolated fight to a full-scale institutional disturbance; from negotiating with hostage takers to providing emotional support for hostages' families during the ordeal; from coordinating the assistance of other law enforcement agencies during a BOP emergency to bolstering local law enforcement in a time of community crisis.

The BOP's job is not an easy one — especially when prison populations are growing, and violent, gang-involved, and long-term inmates are represented in ever-greater numbers. The agency is expanding at a rapid rate — in terms of the number of inmates, the number of institutions needed to house them, and the number of staff needed to operate those institutions. And as the system expands, there is an even greater need for assurance that the prison system operates in a way that ensures public safety, as well as the safety of staff and inmates.

Fulfilling this mandate is a complex challenge. It involves issues like prevention, preparedness, coordination with other agencies, oversight, equipment, and training — as well as the tactical concerns of carrying out a response action.

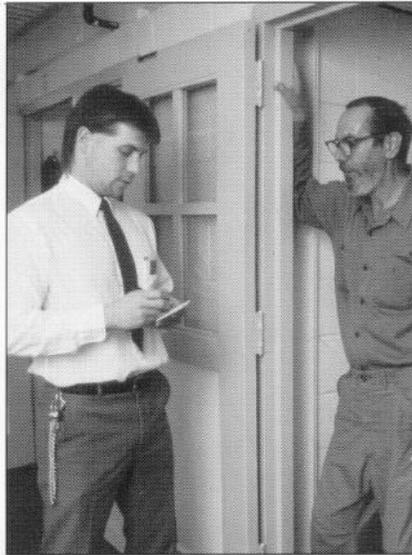


One might think that emergency response starts with developing a tactical response capability. But in reality, prevention and preparation are the most important elements in any emergency scenario.

The classification system used by the BOP screens the incoming population and makes institutional assignments that match inmates with facilities that have the security and supervision features they need. This also means that, to a great extent, inmates are confined with offenders whose levels of sophistication and aggressiveness are similar to their own; this generally prevents comparatively strong inmates (or groups of inmates) from taking advantage of weaker peers. Thus, the classification system prevents many management problems that can lead to larger disturbances.

In the prison setting, communication is a major element in preventing misunderstandings and mistakes that can lead to serious incidents. BOP staff use many means of communicating with inmates, but perhaps the most effective vehicle for open communication is the agency's unit management system.

Under this system, a team of staff from various institutional disciplines (such as correctional officers, case managers, mental health personnel and counselors, and clerical support staff manages each of the inmate housing units. These employees — known collectively as the "unit team" — are delegated a great deal of decision-making responsibility regarding inmate cases and the operation of their particular housing unit. Because inmate services are pro-



FPC Terre Haute Correctional Officer Tom McIntire talks with an inmate on his unit. Communication is a major element in preventing misunderstandings and mistakes that can lead to serious incidents.

vided by employees who are stationed in the housing area (rather than at some remote, centralized site), inmates and unit staff interact directly on a daily basis. This allows staff to gain first-hand knowledge of the inmates they supervise.

Actually, unit management is far more than a method of facilitating communications — it is a vital part of successful institutional operations in the Bureau. Unit management allows staff from many disciplines the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to inmate case management through the unit team. Unit management helps staff know who the inmates really are, what their needs are, and what the institution's response should be to those needs. As an added benefit, inmates develop confidence in the credibility of staff, making it more likely that the inmate population will accept management decisions. That, in turn, is a major factor in preventing institutional disturbances.

Of course, unit staff aren't the only ones who work with inmates — work supervisors, teachers, chaplains, psychologists, physicians, and staff from many other disciplines interact with inmates on a daily basis, keeping the lines of communication between staff and inmates open, and, in many cases, resolving minor issues before they become major problems. Equally important, the day-to-day management of the institution benefits from the way unit management promotes communication among staff in various institution departments.

Intelligence-gathering is another element of prevention that can pay big dividends. The BOP has numerous methods of gathering information about activities in each institution, including telephone monitoring, analysis of reports submitted by BOP staff at the end of each shift, and effective gathering and analysis of confidential information. In addition to gathering information within BOP institutions, the Bureau works closely with non-Bureau law enforcement agencies at the Federal, State, and local levels to track inmate contacts with outside parties who may plan to assist inmates in trafficking narcotics, escaping from the institution, or engaging in other criminal or disruptive activities.

Finally the BOP's correctional worker concept — which stresses that every employee is a correctional worker first and a specialist second — means that every staff member is a potential source of information, analysis, and action. All employees — no matter what their job specialty — are trained in security procedures and trained to be

alert to unusual inmate activities or behavior. Likewise, all employees, not just correctional officers, are expected to respond to an emergency in a BOP institution. The flexible, rapid response capability encouraged by the correctional worker concept is, in many cases, the difference between a fight that is quickly isolated and broken up, and one that escalates into an institution-wide disturbance.

While prevention has an enormous impact on the safety and security of BOP institutions, preparation for an actual emergency is also critical, for the correctional environment can be extremely volatile and efforts to anticipate and prevent disruptive activity may sometimes be unsuccessful.

Every BOP institution has individualized emergency plans that outline definite responses to specific emergencies. These plans, which cover incidents as varied as escape, fire, riot, hostage-taking, and natural disaster, provide staff with information on whom to notify,



FCI Phoenix Warden C.E. Floyd (left) reviews emergency plans with Deputy Chief of Emergency Preparedness Tim Warner (right). Captain Craig Chalmers (center) looks on.

what posts to fill, which outside agencies to call for assistance, and many other contingent actions depending on the nature of the crisis. Every prison staff member is required to review these plans annually, and all plans are updated each year to ensure that they are current.

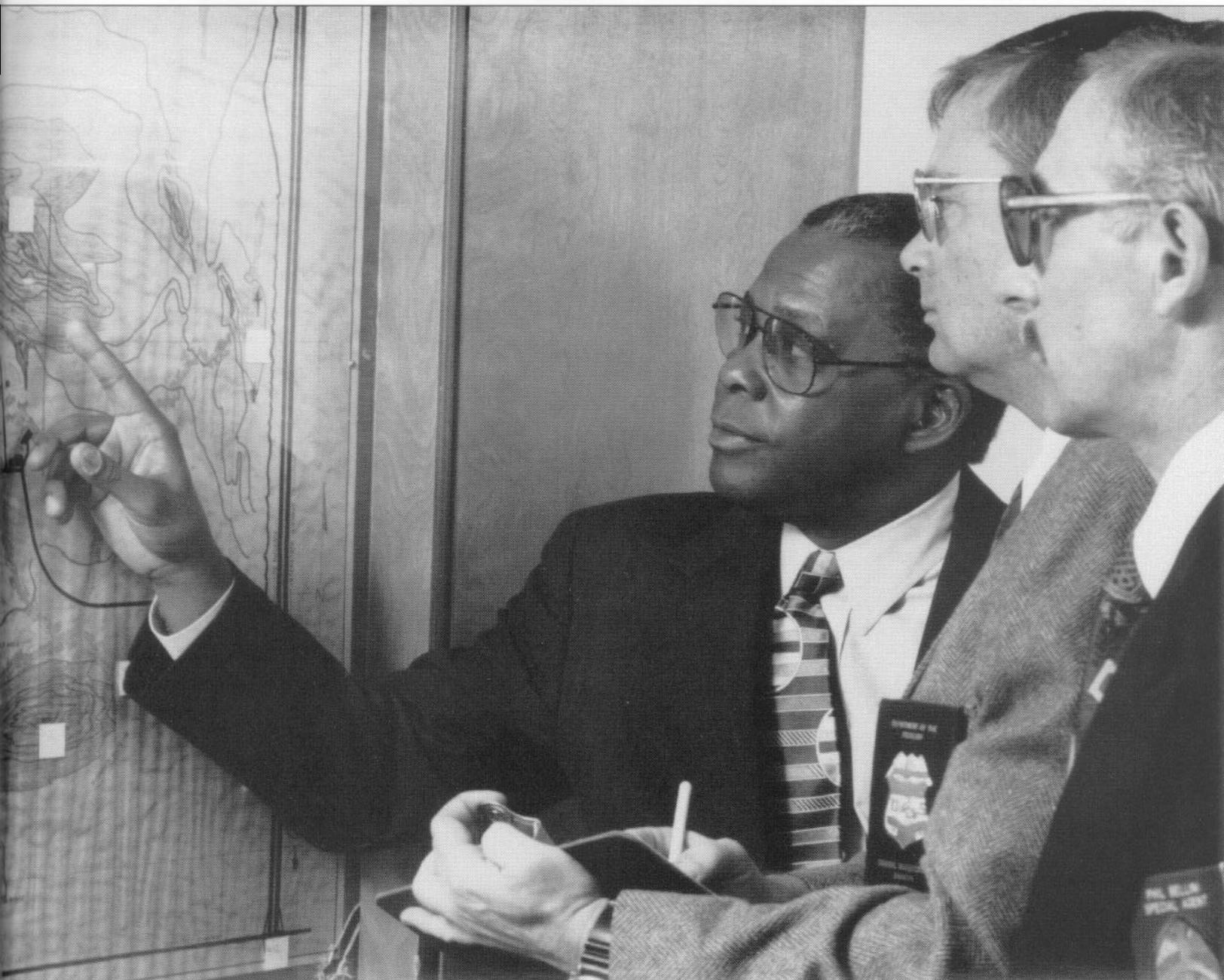
Training in emergency response tactics and techniques is an important element

in the career of every BOP employee. Starting with initial training at the Staff Training Academy in Glynco, Georgia, and continuing in annual refresher training at each BOP location, every employee in a BOP institution (again, not just correctional officers) receives training in important response skills, including the use of firearms.

The BOP's executive and managerial staff is experienced in crisis management issues. The BOP's current Director (while serving as an Assistant Director) was assigned as one of the on-site managers during a major hostage situation at a BOP facility in Talladega, Alabama, in 1991. The Director also recently participated—along with the Deputy Attorney General—in sophisticated crisis management training sessions conducted for top Department of Justice (DOJ) executives by the Federal Bureau of

All staff—regardless of their occupational specialty—participate in basic correctional training at the Staff Training Academy in Glynco, Georgia, and annual refresher training at each BOP institution.





Warden C.E. Floyd discusses contingency plans with other Federal law enforcement officials from the Phoenix area. Interagency cooperation and planning is a key component of the Bureau's emergency response strategy.

Investigation. These officials and other high-level managers in the DOJ and BOP are fully prepared to respond effectively to crisis situations.

Finally in the area of preparedness, the BOP has enacted memoranda of

understanding with the FBI and many other agencies that outline the scope and nature of cooperation among participating agencies during crisis situations. Joint emergency response, hostage negotiation, and tactical planning exercises are held on a regular

basis at every institution. Many BOP institutions conduct mock escape or other types of drills in order to critique their own emergency response readiness and fine-tune their working relationships with other law enforcement agencies.



Above: FCI Phoenix's Disturbance Control Team practices riot control formations.

Right: Lieutenant Stewart Venable reviews breaching plans with SORT members during a training session.

Facing page: FCI Phoenix's SORT stages an assault on a bus.



Classification, unit management, intelligence gathering, and the correctional worker concept go a long way toward preventing potential problems in BOP institutions. Planning and training ensure that staff can respond to small flare-ups immediately, and, in most

cases, resolve situations almost as soon as they begin. But in a small number of cases, more serious problems arise.

The most common response to an emergency that cannot be controlled by staff who initially arrive on the scene is

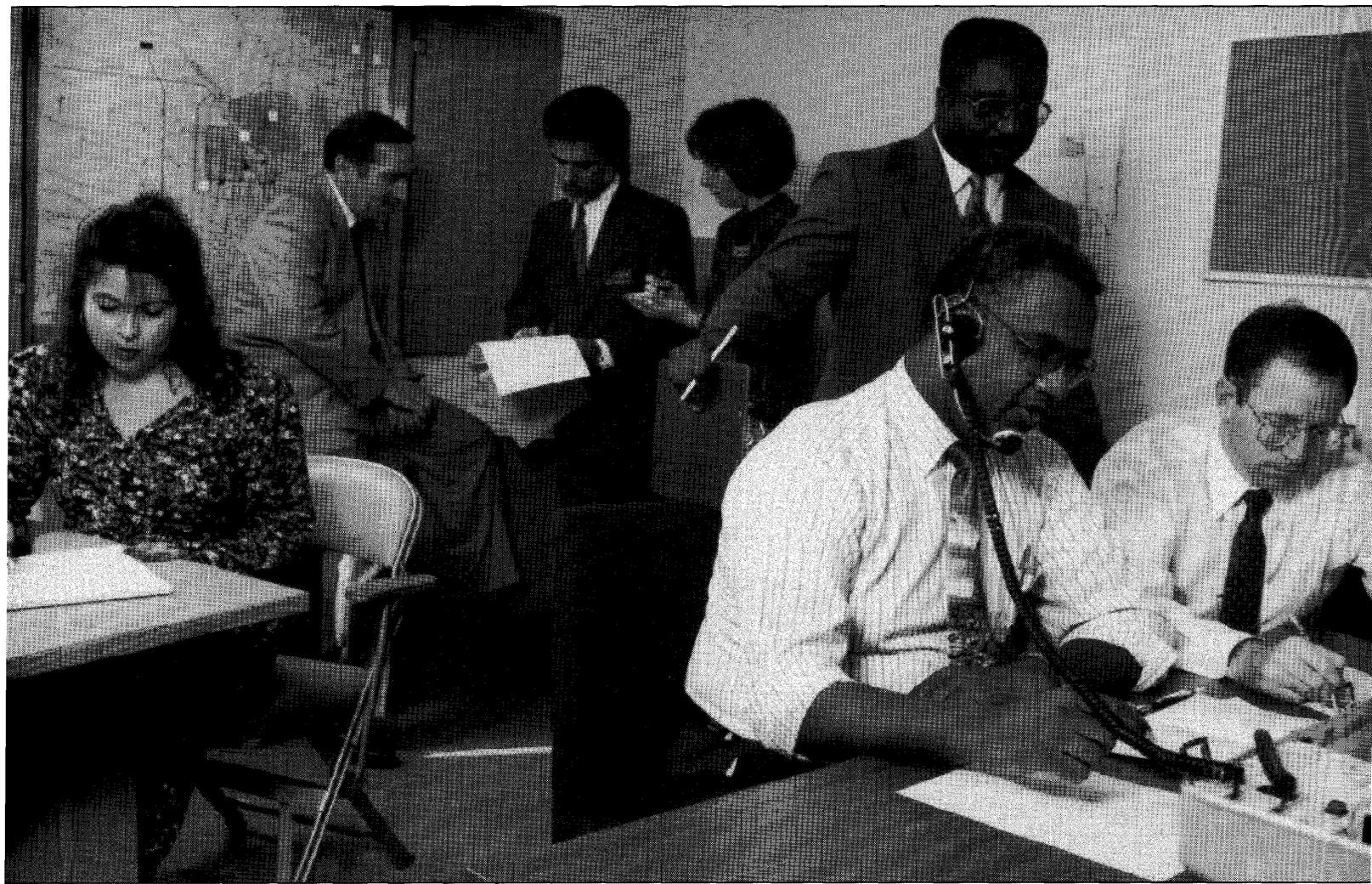
mobilization of a Disturbance Control Team (DCT). This group of trained staff (made up of BOP employees who volunteer from all disciplines and job specialties) provides the first fully organized response to an emergency situation. DCT's are expected to contain,

control, and resolve incidents, up to and including institution-wide disturbances. They receive formal training in riot control procedures, including the control and containment of large and small groups of inmate rioters and the use of defensive equipment such as batons, stun guns, and chemical agents.

Another response option in the BOP is the mobilization of the Special Operations Response Team (SORT). SORT's are small, highly trained, tactical response groups, with greater expertise and specialized training than DCT's. SORT's are maintained at all medium-, high-, administrative-, and maximum-security BOP facilities. SORT members (who are also volunteers drawn from all disciplines) receive specialty training in many tactical skills, including response planning, blueprint reading, rappelling, hostage rescue, building clearing, precision marksmanship, and use of specialty defensive equipment such as distraction devices and non-lethal dispersants. SORT's are required to train 8 hours each month, and they must meet certification standards during annual training and during regional training maneuvers held each year.

SORT's provide the BOP with an internal response capability for situations that may demand maximum use of force, such as the use of specialized weapons. SORT's also provide tactical planning expertise to institution executive staff when they are developing and updating their emergency plans. SORT's develop and practice emergency response plans for each area of their institution, so that they will be prepared should a crisis occur.





The Hostage Negotiation Team at FCI Phoenix. Left to right: Recorder Christina Baker, Case Manager George DeMatteo, Chief Psychologist Dr. Irwin Grossman, Psychologist Dr. Sandra Delahanty, Drug Treatment Specialist David Robinson (seated left), Unit Manager Walter Jones (standing), and Drug Treatment Specialist Charles Roth (seated right).

Yet another category of emergency response in the BOP involves the use of Hostage Negotiation Teams (HNT's). Over the years, the BOP has identified and trained a cadre of hostage negotiators, who are now in place throughout the agency. Ordinarily, each HNT consists of a lead negotiator or team leader and two backup negotiators, all of whom are aided by a mental health specialist. HNT's train each month and participate in two mock exercises each year.

Although they are separate entities, the DCT, SORT, and HNT often work together as a team. Joint exercises are held regularly to test abilities and ensure that all three teams work well together.

This emergency response structure is reviewed and monitored by the BOP's internal oversight system. Both the BOP's Office of Emergency Preparedness (charged with primary operational oversight) and the BOP's Program Review Division (charged with strategic

review of all BOP programs) periodically review the crisis intervention system.

Until the early 1980's, the BOP had relied primarily on other agencies — such as the FBI, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the military — for logistical and operational support to manage crisis situations effectively. The BOP experienced relatively few major incidents before the 1980's, and institution DCT's, supported by law enforcement staff from other agencies, met most of

the Bureau's needs. However, starting in the early 1980's, several incidents convinced Bureau managers that the agency needed an enhanced emergency response capability of its own.

The first of these events occurred in 1983, when a number of assaults and other serious incidents culminated in the murder of two correctional officers at the U.S. Penitentiary (USP) in Marion, Illinois. Large numbers of staff from other BOP facilities across the Nation — some specially trained in use of force and tactical procedures — were temporarily detailed to Marion to help bring an end to the unrest at the institution.

A SORT from USP Leavenworth, Kansas, was one of the first groups to arrive. This team had been trained in highly structured, non-lethal response techniques that were already in use by the U.S. Army at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, but



A staff member embraces a former hostage following the 1987 disturbance at FDC Oakdale.

were new to the BOP (Fort Leavenworth, a disciplinary barracks for inmates sentenced under military law, is adjacent to the BOP's USP Leavenworth, which is a penitentiary for civilian offenders.) The techniques that the Leavenworth SORT used at USP Marion were quite effective — the SORT swiftly and safely resolved inci-

dents in which force was needed, and it provided a highly effective psychological deterrent to other inmates who might otherwise have engaged in dangerous conduct.

As a result of its success at Marion, the SORT concept began to develop in the BOP SORT's were formed at many BOP institutions, and multiple-institution SORT competition and training exercises emerged. Initially, these were sanctioned, but loosely regulated events — largely because the program operated at first without a BOP policy to govern its national implementation.

The need for enhanced response capability was even more clearly demonstrated in November 1987, when Cuban detainees at two BOP institutions — FDC Oakdale, Louisiana, and USP Atlanta, Georgia — rioted, seized control of the facilities, and took a total of 138 staff members hostage. The emergency plans at these institutions did not include contingencies

The Special Operations Response Team from USP Leavenworth, circa 1983.



ties for institution-wide takeovers in which large numbers of hostages were held. Moreover, the BOP faced a monumental task in responding simultaneously to two major riot and hostage situations at different geographical locations; at that time, it did not have the benefit of national emergency response guidelines, planning, or equipment.

Fortunately, the incidents at Atlanta and Oakdale were resolved peacefully through extended negotiations and with the assistance of many other

Federal, State, and local agencies. Still, these incidents taught the BOP difficult lessons about planning and emergency preparedness.

One of the first actions taken following resolution of these two disturbances was an in-depth after-action review, which resulted in 107 recommendations dealing with a variety of emergency preparedness issues. In order to ensure that these recommendations were implemented and followed, the BOP established the Office of

Emergency Preparedness (OEP) within the Correctional Programs Division at the Central Office. OEP was given the responsibility of ensuring that the 107 recommendations, all approved by the BOP's Executive Staff, were written in policy and implemented agency-wide.

The Atlanta/Oakdale riots also showed that SORT's needed more national direction and control, and that DCT's and HNT's needed to work together with SORT's to create a system of coordinated emergency response.





Above and left: FCI Phoenix SORT members complete various segments of the institution's 14-station obstacle course. Physical conditioning is an important part of SORT training.

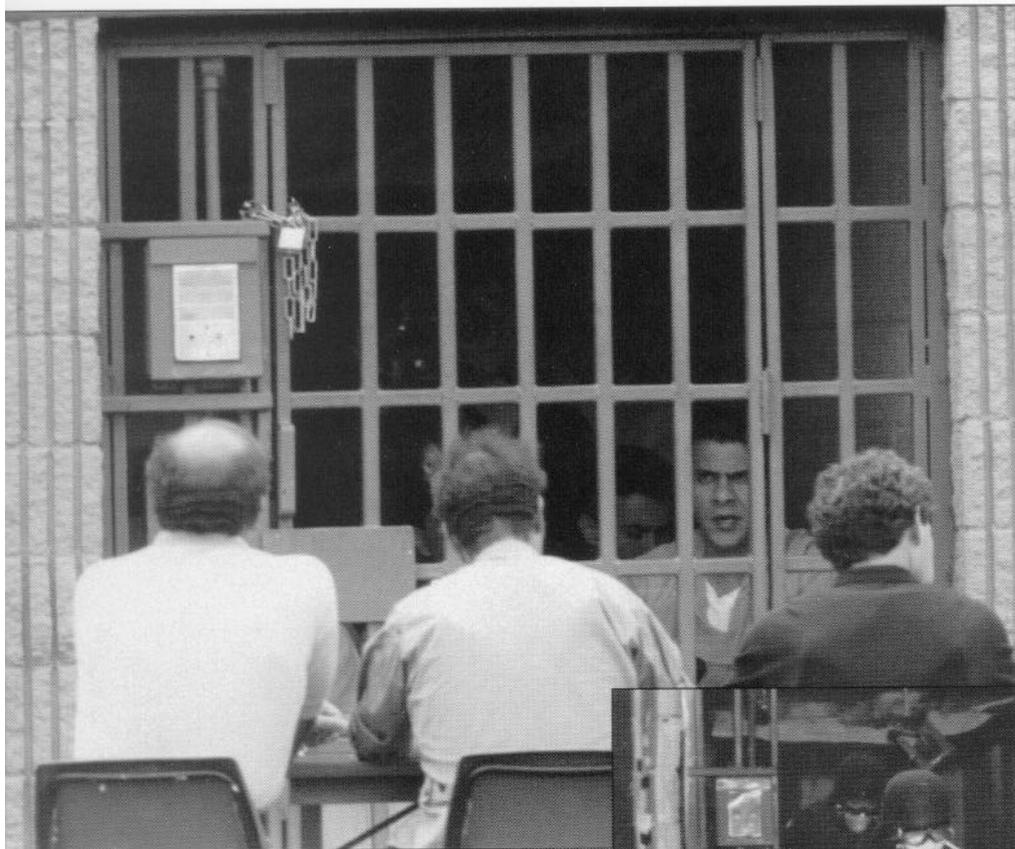
The Atlanta/Oakdale recommendations produced immediate changes in the way SORT exercises were conducted. Until that time, SORT competitions had been comparatively unstructured, athletically-based tournaments between

SORT's from BOP institutions and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams from State and local law enforcement agencies. After 1988, SORT exercises became organized, week-long regional training events that focused on collaboration between SORT's and featured tests of mental, as well as physical, acuity.

In 1990, the OEP began developing guidelines for certifying SORT teams' abilities, including problem-solving and

the use of tactical and firearms skills for the resolution of emergency situations. During regional SORT training, each team would now be expected to demonstrate its ability to adhere to these guidelines and meet the prescribed standards.

At this point—in the fall of 1991—the third defining event in the evolution of BOP emergency response strategies occurred. Just before the first regional SORT training and maneuvers certifi-



Above: BOP staff negotiate with hostage takers during 1991 standoff at FCI Talladega.

Right: BOP and FBI staff immediately after Talladega hostages are rescued.

cation was to take place, Cuban detainees awaiting repatriation overpowered staff in a detention unit at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Talladega, Alabama, took control of the unit, and held as many as 10 BOP and INS employees hostage. After protracted but unsuccessful negotiations over a 10-day period, BOP and FBI tactical teams stormed the unit, regained control, and safely rescued all of the hostages.

This incident demonstrated the dividends paid by hard work and the application of the lessons learned at



Atlanta and Oakdale; the BOP's response capability had been significantly increased, both at the local and national levels. FCI Talladega's own DCT, SORT, and HNT were mobilized quickly; their decisive actions in the early hours of the crisis contained the disturbance to a single housing unit and prevented the unrest from spreading throughout the institution.

When it became clear that the situation would take some time to resolve, the BOP reinforced FCI Talladega's staff with SORT's, DCT's, and HNT's from other Bureau institutions. It also activated command centers at the Central Office and Southeast Regional Office and provided logistical support — such as meals, clothing, counseling, and financial assistance — to the families of those taken hostage and to staff temporarily detailed to Talladega during the crisis.

BOP hostage negotiation teams worked alongside their FBI counterparts throughout the crisis. BOP and FBI intelligence-gathering techniques were used to collect important information about the situation. Ultimately, and most importantly, joint tactical action between the agencies resulted in a successful resolution of the crisis. All hostages were rescued

safely, no inmates escaped, and no staff or inmates received significant injuries during the crisis or its resolution.

The BOP learned from this incident as well; an after action analysis of the crisis resulted in a set of additional emergency response recommendations. The BOP further expanded the overall response concept, establishing a requirement for all medium-security institutions and higher to form their own SORT's and HNT's. Increased emphasis was placed on ensuring that BOP DCT's were trained and equipped sufficiently.

The BOP also learned that equipment needed in an emergency must be available and ready for rapid shipment to a crisis site. Because this need is so great, each region now maintains an emergency logistics center—equipped with supplies ranging from emergency lighting to portable field kitchens—to support institution operations in an emergency.

Since the Talladega incident, the BOP has faced other significant crisis situations that have required deployment of emergency response teams. In the summer of 1992, at the request of the Attorney General, BOP SORT's were detailed on an unprecedented mission to assist in quelling the civil unrest and rioting in the city of Los Angeles. The BOP's emergency response system was also tested later in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew struck south Florida and severely damaged two BOP facilities — necessitating the evacuation and relocation of more than 1,400 inmates.

The response capability demonstrated so well in Los Angeles and Miami was proof that the BOP had successfully incorporated the lessons learned from Atlanta, Oakdale, and Talladega. The changes in SORT's over the years—from local, loosely structured, independent teams, to teams that were nationally administered, highly organized, and uniformly trained — meant that BOP SORT's were now ready to function effectively, even in what normally would be considered a role for police SWAT teams.

Today, the BOP continues to seek out, develop, and review new ideas and technologies that can improve emergency readiness. The Office of Security Technology, within the Information, Policy, and Public Affairs Division, is charged with keeping abreast of and evaluating new security technologies and, if they are applicable to BOP operations, recommending them to the OEP or other appropriate BOP users. During 1994, the

Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reviewed the BOP-wide emergency response system, at the request of the Director. The Inspector General's Office reviewed OEP operations at the Central and regional offices, and those of selected institutions' emergency response teams. The OIG's final report recommended increased emphasis on training for DCT's, the establishment of certification standards for DCT's, and the implementation of disturbance control training for all institution personnel during annual refresher training.

OEP has responded to OIG's report by recommending new policies and procedures to the BOP Executive Staff. These include a certification process for DCT's, increased training in disturbance control techniques (to include a segment for all staff during annual refresher training), and standardized equipment for all DCT's.

Hurricane Andrew's 168-mile-an-hour winds toppled high-mast lighting at MCC Miami. The hurricane also cut off water, power, and communications at the MCC and caused severe damage to several structures and the perimeter fence, necessitating the evacuation of more than 1,400 inmates.





FCI Phoenix's Disturbance Control Team unwinds after a long, hot day of training. Team leader Vernon

Neel (left) holds a 37/38 mm. gas gun



While Disturbance Control Teams remain the primary emergency response asset of the BOP, future plans include further integration of the emergency response system through the participation of DCT members and HNT's in annual SORT maneuvers and training. Also, the oversight process within OEP now includes a computer software program that allows regular review of logistical data (for instance, the availability of stock-piled equipment and supplies), and DCT, HNT, and SORT training and qualifications. All records in the system are updated at the regional office level and electronically transferred to the Central Office computer system. During a crisis, the Central Office command center can search records nationwide to find specific equipment, specially-trained staff, or employees with needed language skills.

The continued rapid expansion of the BOP and the influx of younger, more violent offenders necessitates a continued emphasis on emergency preparedness. Strengthened by lessons learned from the recent past, the BOP now stands ready to respond appropriately to crises at the local, regional, or national level.